

Best Management Practices

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION



Black-tailed jackrabbit

Lepus californicus

Common name • Black-tailed jackrabbit

Scientific name • *Lepus californicus*

State status • Endangered

Ecology

Black-tailed jackrabbits reside in the open plains of North America. In Missouri, they occupy pastures, hay fields and cultivated areas, especially before crops grow more than 2 feet tall. Jackrabbits breed year-round, although most breeding occurs from late winter to mid-summer. Pregnancy lasts 41-47 days, at which time two-four young are born. Females may have as many as four litters per year. Young become independent when they are 3-4 weeks old. Jackrabbits eat only vegetation. During summer, they prefer herbaceous plants and grasses; the winter diet consists of dried grasses, buds, twigs, roots and bark.

Reasons for Decline

It is likely that black-tailed jackrabbits are suffering from the loss of native tallgrass prairies in Missouri. The trend toward extensive cultivation has caused a decrease in black-tailed jackrabbit habitat that is reflected in their declining populations. In addition, humans have historically decimated their populations by poisoning, shooting and trapping rabbits when they are observed near cropland.

Specific Recommendations

Black-tailed jackrabbits need large expanses of grassland with open vistas.

→ Avoid destroying native grassland habitat.

Replant native warm-season grasses and forbs following ground-disturbing activities.

→ Avoid the use of non-native plants such as tall fescue.

→ When damage to crops is extensive, build rabbit fences that are made of woven wire or poultry netting, with the bottom turned out and buried at least 6 inches deep and 3 feet high.

→ Loosely wrap young orchard trees with trunk protectors made of plastic, cardboard, paper, aluminum or poultry netting.

→ Removal of woody vegetation in grassland habitats would benefit jackrabbits by opening up vistas.

Information Contacts

For further information regarding regulations for development near prairies, contact:

Missouri Department of Conservation
Policy Coordination Section
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Telephone: 573/751-4115

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Division of Environmental Quality
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176
Telephone: 573/526-3315

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Regulatory Branch
700 Federal Building
Kansas City, MO 64106-2896
Telephone: 816/983-3990

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Water, Wetlands, and Pesticides Division
901 North 5th Street
Kansas City, KS 66101
Telephone: 913/551-7307

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Ecological Services Field Office
608 E. Cherry Street, Room 200
Columbia, MO 65201
Telephone: 573/876-1911

Disclaimer

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